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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002231

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: WASIT: SADRIST PC MEMBERS MEET PRT AND BRIGADE  
COMMANDER, EMPHASIZE DISTANCE FROM JAM

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Robert Kagler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
) .

1.(S / / REL TO USA, ACGU) Summary: On July 12, in the most recent engagement between the Sadrist Trend and PRT Wasit, Sadrist Trend Provincial Council (PC) members Ahmed Hasan Ebrah and Siraj Anwar Ali met with the PRT Team Leader, Poloff, and the new Commander of the U.S. 41st Fires Brigade. The focus of the meeting turned to a discussion of security in Wasit, the decline of the JAM, and a request for American assistance in obtaining the release of four Wasit residents: two ISCI PC members and two other citizens, all detained by American forces earlier this year. This was Siraj Anwar Ali,s first meeting with the PRT Political team and likely signals an expansion of the number of Sadrist Trend leaders now willing to engage with the PRT. End Summary.

Distancing OMS from JAM  
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2.(S / / REL TO USA, ACGU) The two Sadrist leaders were clearly interested in explaining their views of the security situation to the new American commander. Ebrah explained that JAM was nearly gone and would cease to exist in the near future. He also stated that the Sadrist Trend had rejected violence. He further noted that even though only perhaps 10 percent of former JAM members continued to be violent, JAM and Sadr continue to get blamed for this violence. Siraj pointed out that there was a difference that he wished the Americans to understand between the Sadrist Trend political office and JAM. Ebrah added that they have had good meetings and has established trust between the Americans and the Sadrist Trend. He said he had received permission from the new head of Sadr's office in Al Kut, Sheikh Sai,d, (Sai,d arrived from Najaf in June 08) to continue his dialogue with the Americans. Both Sadrists agreed that the border with Iran was one of the chief security problems in the province and asked that the Americans focus on securing the border. Further, they requested that the security forces not use the tribes to provide border security as they have long-standing relationships with groups on the Iranian side of the border and have long been involved in border smuggling operations.

Power Plant Needed  
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13. (S/ / REL TO USA, ACGU) Explaining that only employment will bring true stability to the province, the two Sadrist leaders asked for American help in pushing the Iraqi government to move quickly to begin the construction of a 900 million USD Chinese-contracted electrical power plant. The power station is planned for a location near the north Wasit city of Zubadiyah. The construction and operation of this huge plant and its support industries, including a possible oil refinery, fuel pipelines and perhaps the development of Wasit,s known but as yet untapped oil reserves, would generate large numbers of jobs. It would also likely eliminate the electrical power deficit in Wasit and thus help stimulate economic growth.

Another Request to Release Detainees  
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14. (S/ / REL TO USA, ACGU) Finally, Ebrah asked for information on and the release of four Wasit residents, two Provincial Council members and two other citizens, detained by American forces earlier this year. PC members Qassim Mohammad Jalal Al A,riji and Fadil Jassim Mohammad Al Zarkani, both of the ISCI party, were arrested in January along with a Sadrist local council member from Suwayrah, Jamal Hafdh. They also inquired about Ahmad Abd Al Ridha Sadoon Al A,abidi, from the Al Zuwarijat district of Al Kut and a cousin of Ebrah, who was arrested in early June.

15. (S/ / REL USA, ACGU) Comment: The request of Ebrah for the release of detainees from Wasit is not new. However, having two Sadrist Trend representatives at the meeting with the PRT is a new and perhaps positive development. All previous Sadr engagements were limited to just Ebrah. We judge that Ebrah and Saraj are two of the top six leaders of the Sadr office in Al Kut. It is also perhaps significant that they wished to establish a positive relationship with the new American military commander. This was perhaps motivated by a sense of insecurity due to recent anti-Sadr actions by the Iraqi government. Ebrah asked that the Americans not believe everything they hear about him and to not act on the word of just one source. The meeting was positive in introducing a new Sadrist Trend leader to the PRT but Ebrah offered no new information and excused himself by saying that it had been a long meeting when asked about Sadr intentions for the upcoming elections. End Comment.

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